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Volume 4, Number 6
NOV 6 '86
November/December 1986

A Bimonthly Newsletter for Economic Research Service Employees and Colleagues

Ericksen is New Deputy Associate Administrator

Milton Ericksen is ERS's new Deputy Associate Administrator. Ericksen started with ERS in 1966



at the Manhattan, Kansas, field office. He transferred to Washington in 1971 to work with an aggregate production analysis team, which at that time was using national models to analyze policy problems.

From 1974 to 1976, Ericksen worked at the ERS field office at Stillwater, Oklahoma, where his principal assignment with the Agricultural Policy Analysis (APA) Program Area was liaison with the Oklahoma State faculty on analysis of national policy issues and on the use of the POLYSIM model.

Ericksen returned to Washington in August 1976 as a senior staff analyst in APA. He subsequently assumed leadership of APA in 1977. In 1980, he became chief of the Crops Branch in ERS's National Economics Division (NED). He spent June

1984 through June 1985 at Australia's Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE) as part of the ERS-BAE staff exchange program and was reassigned as chief of NED's Food and Agricultural Policy Branch when he returned.

Ericksen has a B.S. (with distinction) and an M.S. from the University of Nebraska and a Ph.D. from Kansas State University. He was selected for membership in the Alpha Zeta, Gamma Sigma Delta, and Sigma Xi honorary societies as an undergraduate. He has received a USDA Certificate of Merit and two ERS Administrator's Special Merit Awards. Also, he was a member of APA when that group received the first AAFA Excellence Award for Policy Analysis.

Recent Organizational Changes:

New Priorities Lead to NRED Realignment and...

ERS's Natural Resource Economics Division has realigned its organizational structure and staff assignments to address changing research priorities, including the need for new and expanded research on technology assessment, land values, input substitution and productivity relationships, and the effects of domestic and international policies on natural resources and manufactured inputs. The realignment reduces the number of branches from five to four. The

new Soil and Water Branch, whose acting chief is Linda Lee, comprises the functions of the former Soil Conservation Economics Branch and the former Water Economics Branch. Also, the Externalities Group, formerly in the Office of the Director, will become a section in the Soil and Water Branch.

In addition to matching NRED's organization and staff expertise with new priorities, the realignment aims to increase program efficiency, enhance divisionwide teamwork in research, analysis, and data collection, provide more research time for NRED managers, and contribute to a better public understanding of ERS's natural resource and input research program.

...ARED Merges Two Branches

ERS's Agriculture and Rural Economics Division (ARED) has merged its former Aggregate Analysis and Macroeconomics Branch and the Agriculture and

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Rural History Branch into one branch, the National Economy and History Branch.

The new branch, whose chief is Thomas Hady (formerly chief of the Aggregate Analysis and Macroeconomics Branch), has three sections: the National Aggregate Analysis Section (whose leader is Gerald Schluter), the Agricultural and Rural History Section (whose leader is Douglas Bowers), and the Macroeconomics Section (whose acting leader is Thomas Hady).

ERS Data Now Available for Sale

To obtain an order form and catalog of all the data series available for sale on diskettes or tape, write to ERS/Data, 1301 New York Ave., NW., Room 228, Washington, DC 20005-4788, or call (202) 786-1494.

Current Research

Farm Population Declines

ERS researcher Judith Kalbacher and Diane de Are (U.S. Bureau of the Census) recently analyzed current demographic and economic trends in the U.S. farm population. Their findings reveal a 7-percent decline in the farm population since 1984—the first significant annual loss of the 1980's. The southern and western regions of the Nation account for most of the loss.

Kalbacher and de Are's study, *The Farm Population of the United States: 1985* (Current Population Reports, Series P-27, No. 59, U.S. Bureau of the Census), analyzes

recent declines in the subset of the farm population actively involved in farming. In some cases, farm families were reclassified into the nonfarm population when their agricultural sales slipped below the \$1,000 minimum of sales required for operations to be defined as farms. In other cases, farm families lost their land by foreclosure.

U.S. Agricultural Exports to Japan Are on the Rise

Liberalization of Japan's import quotas will translate into an additional \$35-40 million per year of U.S. agricultural exports to Japan through 1989, according to ERS economist William Coyle (786-1611). With more liberal trade policies, Japan's imports of beef and, to a lesser extent, citrus products will grow considerably. Japan will bring its citrus market closer to free trade by 1987, but its beef imports in 1987 will still be significantly less than what they would be under free trade.

The agricultural trade problems between Japan and the United States over the past 10 years have centered around beef and citrus. Japan wants to protect those sectors from international competition because of its general concern about food security, food self-sufficiency, and preservation of its agriculture.

Japan's import quotas on beef and citrus products, however, are symbolic of the broader problem of protectionism, both overt and covert.

ERS Task Force Analyzes U.S.-Canadian Trade Issues

ERS economists Robert House (786-1784) and Mary Anne Normile

(786-1666) are coleaders of an ERS task force that is analyzing trade issues for the U.S.-Canadian trade liberalization negotiations.

In the first phase of the project, major tariff and nontariff agricultural trade barriers between the countries were identified, and the impacts of selected border measure changes were analyzed. Also, producer and consumer subsidy equivalents for various agricultural commodities were estimated.

In the second phase of the project, shifts in regional production and trade flows (given hypothetical changes in domestic agricultural policies and border measures) will be determined. Two principal models are being developed: a spatial equilibrium model with 10 U.S. and 2 Canadian regions and a static world trade policy simulator with U.S. and Canadian components.

Preliminary results will be available in January 1987.

Economic Research Service

Vol. 4, No. 6, Nov./Dec. 1986

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The *ERS Newsletter* is published bimonthly and distributed free to ERS employees, colleagues, and retirees. Subscription requests and address changes should be addressed to the Editor, *ERS Newsletter*, ERS/USDA, Room 1212, 1301 New York Ave., NW., Washington, DC 20005-4788 (202-786-3310).

Deputy Administrator's Letter—*Outlook Program Review*

ERS was established 25 years ago to "...provide the information base necessary to enhance the quality of public policymaking and program management...and private sector decisionmaking...affecting agriculture, natural resources, and the well-being of rural people." Over the years, the outlook program has played a critical role in meeting ERS's mandate, along with the research and staff analysis programs.



As part of its commitment to excellence, ERS is undertaking a comprehensive review of the outlook program with an eye toward making a good program better. This undertaking involves both an internal review and external reviews by our outlook product users in agribusiness, the university and extension communities, and other government agencies. The internal review, initiated by ERS Administrator John Lee on September 30, 1986, is designed to draw on the ERS staff to identify opportunities for improving the program. All analysts have been invited to comment on the program and pass their suggestions on to the recently established Outlook Review Task Force (chaired by ERS economist Ronald Trostle), which will report back to and work with ERS's top management team during November 1986. All aspects of the program are open for comment.

The external reviews of the outlook program are further along than the internal review. The 1985 USDA Economics and Statistics Review Panel (see *ERS Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 5, Sept./Oct. 1985) and the March 1986 ERS Readership Survey (a survey of outlook report users) provided a number of insights on how users view the ERS program. The Grace Commission Report and continuing feedback from users within USDA, particularly the Office of the Secretary and the World Agricultural Outlook Board, also have added insights.

Many of the concerns raised in the external reviews deal with the day-to-day operation of the program and will have to be evaluated in conjunction with internal review conclusions. However, several of the points raised by the outside reviewers warrant consideration while the internal review is proceeding, particularly their concern about how ERS markets its outlook products.

Several initiatives to establish closer links with users are under consideration. They include establishing an ERS Outlook Review Panel made up of outlook leaders from agribusiness, university, and government. The Panel would meet annually or semiannually to provide substantive feedback on the general content, orientation, and performance of the program. Individual report panels are also being considered. Each 3-5 member panel would be charged with reviewing, after publication, one of the major outlook report series (such as the *Oil Crops Situation and Outlook Report*) and would serve as an editorial sounding board for the report series coordinator and authors. Both the ERS Outlook Review Panel and the individual report series panels would time their reviews to support the agency's planning cycle. As part of this effort at expanding user contacts, we are also working with USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to broaden their regional Statistics Users Meetings into Economics and Statistics Users Meetings. By sharing the agenda with NASS, ERS can broaden the public awareness of its program.

Several initiatives are also under consideration to better meet user information needs. These include initiating 1-day quarterly ERS-Industry Outlook Conferences held at various sites around the country to facilitate contact with other outlook analysts and to better disseminate our information. Also, given the demand for outlook information in Washington, DC, we are also exploring the possibility of a monthly or quarterly Washington Outlook Review, which would be open to the public.

To better meet user needs also involves reviewing the mix and timing of ERS's printed products. We are considering alternative formats and schedules for the feed grain and the livestock and poultry reports with a view toward developing prototypes for the other major outlook report series. We are also evaluating the demand for expanded ERS reporting in areas such as farm income and finance.

The internal review and the external initiatives are part of a single drive for excellence in the outlook area. I look forward to reporting on internal initiatives as the review progresses. With the support of the staff in making the improvements that grow out of the reviews, outlook will continue to be a critical part of ERS and USDA's program.

Patrick O'Brien
Patrick O'Brien

The LDC's Are in Debt, But...

ERS economists Mathew Shane and David Stallings (786-1624) are studying the impacts of debt problems of less developed countries (LDC's) on international trade and development. LDC's are adopting a range of economic measures to overcome those problems, and those measures are having both positive and negative impacts on production performance, investment incentives, employment, consumer welfare, and external trade.

The objectives of Shane and Stallings' research are to:

- depict the range and magnitude of LDC debt, with particular emphasis on how conditions have changed since 1981-82;
- develop and evaluate alternative long-term solutions to LDC debt problems; and
- evaluate the implications of such alternatives for U.S. agricultural exports.

Some questions that Shane and Stallings will address are:

- What is the set of debt rescheduling measures most conducive to fostering LDC development and trade?
- What are the main debt restructuring measures being followed in LDC's?
- What are the impacts of those measures on LDC consumers and producers and on LDC trade with other nations, particularly the United States?

From 1975-80, LDC's provided the fastest growing market for U.S. agricultural exports. The share of total U.S. agricultural commercial sales to the LDC's grew from 30 percent to almost 35 percent during that period. The sales were especially concentrated in the

middle-income LDC's. Those nations with the most serious debt repayment problems have severely curtailed purchases of U.S. agricultural products.

The world debt problem has temporarily moved out of the crisis stage. Yet the long-term solutions involve serious realignment of export-import patterns, suggesting that the debt problems will continue to be a constraint on trade for some time to come.

The results of this project are expected to be published by early 1987.

...Are They Potential Growth Markets?

ERS economist Robert Christiansen (786-1631) is analyzing the impact of economic growth on patterns of agricultural production and trade in LDC's. Christiansen's study, which concentrates on food grains, feed grains, and oilseeds in 66 countries, attempts to determine which commodities are supplied primarily by domestic production and which are supplied primarily by imports.

A substantial market exists for agricultural exports to LDC's once their economies begin to grow, but that market is limited to certain commodities, according to preliminary results. Also, the United States has a considerable advantage over its competitors in supplying some commodities but has not done as well in others.

Crop Research Yields Results

ERS economists Mark Ash (786-1840) and William Lin are studying the economic and weather-related yield responses

for the major grains. Their research involves estimating the impacts of precipitation and temperature variation during critical growing months for wheat (winter and spring), rice, corn, sorghum, barley, and oats. Their analysis entails interregional comparisons among the major U.S. growing regions of each crop's rate and variability of yield growth. The role of fertilizer prices



and acreage is also being examined. They are also considering the nature of the effects of acreage reduction programs on yield and the extent of slippage in farm programs. Projections of crop yields through 1989, assuming normal weather conditions, are also being calculated.

In their results thus far, Ash and Lin have found that excessive precipitation in May and June has negative effects on winter wheat yields in the Northern Plains. Above-normal temperatures in June and July reduce wheat yields by 0.7 and 0.9 bushels per acre, respectively. In the case of rice in Arkansas, high July temperatures and excessive August and September precipitation induce below-trend yields. For corn in the Corn Belt, soil moisture prior to planting and July precipitation and

temperature are the most important weather factors (e.g., 1-inch-above-normal July precipitation increases corn yields by 0.3 bushels per acre).

Ash and Lin, together with ERS economist Warren Grant, are also tracking the adoption of the new, high-yield hybrids of wheat and semidwarf varieties of rice.

How Do Inventories Affect Price Variability?

Cooperative research by Peter Helmberger and Mario Miranda (University of Wisconsin) and ERS economist Joseph Glauber (786-1840) is focusing on the effects of private and public stockholding on price levels and variability. Using dynamic stochastic programming techniques, they have developed a rational expectations model of the U.S. soybean market that allows them to compare price variability in a strictly competitive market to variability in markets where price supports or direct payment programs are present. The welfare effects of such programs will be compared with alternative programs, including storage subsidies and price supports based on moving averages of past prices. Glauber is also examining the effects of risk on inventory-holding behavior and how risk affects intertemporal prices.

In related research, Glauber and ERS economist Richard Heifner (786-1868) have developed an econometric model that estimates the effects of inventory levels, interest rates, and the level of futures prices on the level of futures price variability. The estimates should aid researchers in providing more accurate models for pricing agricultural options.



Dairy Sector Is Drain on EC's Budget

The drain on the European Community's (EC) budget from the dairy sector prompted the EC to initiate reforms in 1984, which had an immediate impact on milk production, with deliveries down by 5 percent during the first year following the administration of milk quotas. The reforms also reduced the number of dairy cows, implying an annual 2.6-million-ton reduction in EC demand for imported feeds, including soybean meal, corn gluten feed, and citrus pellets from the United States.

For further details, see *EC Dairy Sector: Policies, Problems, and Prospects* (AGES-860313) by Ronald Trostle, Marshall Cohen, Miles Lambert, James Lopes, and Stephen Sposato (786-1716).

Groundwater Contamination Is Assessed

A nationwide study by ERS researchers Linda Lee and Elizabeth Nielsen (786-1444) will provide new insights on the magnitude, distribution, and costs of groundwater contamination from agricultural chemicals. Their preliminary results underscore the need for different approaches to deal with nitrate (fertilizer) and pesticide contamination. Nitrate contamination, which affects relatively few wells, can be monitored and corrected more easily than pesticide contamination. Because pesticide contamination potentially affects as

many as 5.6 million private wells, prevention would be more cost effective than monitoring and correction.

Not all regions are equally vulnerable to groundwater contamination, hence the potential payoff from targeting government programs to the most vulnerable. Educational programs for farmers may be especially appropriate, and not just because farming contributes to contamination. Farmers, whose wells are closest to the sources of contamination, are also potential victims.

Lower Property Taxes Limit State and Local Revenue

Preferential assessment of farmland, which reduces the property taxes that farmers pay, is hardly new. According to ERS researcher William Anderson (786-1424), 47 States now have tax legislation assessing farmland according to its value in agricultural use rather than residential, commercial, or industrial uses. The remaining States give or plan to give farmers some form of preferential tax treatment.

At a symposium held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association, participants raised new questions about the property tax treatment of farmers in today's setting. Continued support for preferential treatment comes from rural nonfarm and urban residents who want a viable agriculture

maintained in or near their communities. The origin of most preferential tax legislation, moreover, traces to rural nonfarm and urban support rather than to agricultural interests seeking tax breaks for farmers.

Although farmland protection has been displaced as a high priority issue by other concerns at the Federal level, Anderson argued that the priority has not changed at other levels of government in urbanizing areas. At the same time, State and local governments are increasingly concerned about generating tax revenues. In some States, the growing gap between lower farmland values and rising market prices of land for housing has focused greater attention on the revenue problem.

New Data To Pinpoint Effects of Urbanization

ERS researchers who monitor and analyze land-use changes will soon have new data from aerial photography to help measure the effects of urbanization on agriculture. They are working with the Earth Satellite Corporation to compile data needed for an indepth, nationwide study of land-use changes in 138 counties that experienced rapid population growth during the 1970's. Some of the counties gained cropland despite the increased population, and some lost cropland.

Because the extent and significance of land-use shifts in urban areas are not fully documented by occasional surveys, analysts at different levels of government have been hard pressed to give land-use policymakers the economic information they need. By

providing more frequent and detailed information on land use, aerial photography may help overcome that limitation.

Federal Reserve Bank Uses ERS's Typology

Three researchers at the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City have written an article on economic changes in rural America using a typology based on the one developed by ERS. The ERS typology was published in *The Diverse Social and Economic Structure of Nonmetropolitan America* (RDRR-49, September 1985) by Lloyd Bender and others.

The authors of the Federal Reserve Bank's article, which appeared in the July/August 1986 issue of the Bank's *Economic Review*, concluded that the problems facing rural America are not cyclical, but long term, and are not confined to the farm sector, but also include the manufacturing and energy sectors. Thus, the challenge facing policymakers will be to develop policies that address the full range of needed industrial restructuring in rural areas.

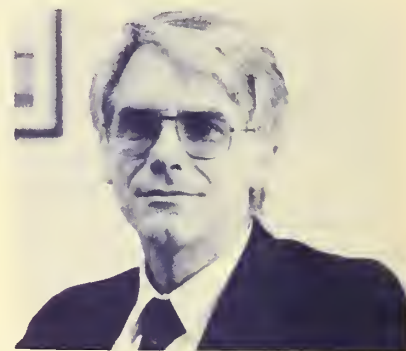
Personnel Notes

Carlin Named Branch Chief

Thomas Carlin is the new chief, Farm and Rural Economy Branch, Agriculture and Rural Economics Division. Since October 1985, Carlin had been leader of the Branch's Farm Family Income Section. From 1974 to 1985, he was leader of the Income Studies Section, Human Resources Branch, in the former Economic Development Division. Prior to that, he held project leader and

research positions in the National Economic Analysis Division, a predecessor of ERS's National Economics Division. Carlin joined ERS in 1971.

Carlin has supervised and published research on a wide range of issues in agriculture and rural development. His published reports cover such topics as the distribution of farm and rural household income, rural poverty, distributive impacts of rural employment growth, effects of alternative negative income tax proposals on rural places and people, role of small farms in U.S. agriculture, effects of Federal income tax provisions on farmers, and farm sector economic



accounts. He serves on USDA's State Food Stamp Appeals Board and has served on numerous other task forces and committees while in ERS. He received two USDA Certificates of Merit for program planning and management.

Carlin has a Ph.D. in agricultural economics from Pennsylvania State University and M.S. and B.S. degrees in agricultural economics from the University of Georgia.

Christensen Transfers to Western Europe Branch

Cheryl Christensen is the new chief of the Western Europe Branch, International Economics Division. She received a B.A. from



the University of Minnesota and a Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She taught at the University of Pittsburgh during 1973-75. In 1976, she was awarded a Council on Foreign Relations Fellowship and spent a year in ERS examining global food issues. She taught at the University of Maryland from 1977 until mid-1980 when she joined ERS as chief of the Africa/Middle East Branch.

Christensen has written and spoken widely on food policy and development issues, both inside and outside USDA. She contributed to and managed the Africa/Middle East Branch's study, *Food Problems and Prospects in Sub-Saharan Africa*, for which she received the ERS Administrator's Special Merit Award in 1981.

Highlights of Staff Activities

Agriculture and Rural Economics Division

Bernal Green is on a 3-year assignment at the Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, where he will analyze economic conditions in farm-dependent communities and subregions of Arkansas and surrounding States • **Douglas Bowers** briefed a group of Senator Strom Thurmond's interns on the

history of USDA • **Clifford Rossi** reviewed Federal taxation techniques for farmers at a meeting of the American Bar Association on tax planning for agriculture, in Denver • **David Brown** testified before the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress about demographic and socioeconomic trends in rural America • **Kenneth Deavers** and **Norman Reid** consulted with experts on rural public management at a meeting of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in Paris, France • and at the annual meeting of the Rural Sociological Society, in Salt Lake City, **Leonard Bloomquist**, **Molly Killian**, **David McGranahan**, **Shelley Pendleton**, and **Leslie Whitener** presented papers in a session on rural labor market issues and data that was organized by **Pendleton**; **Robert Muñoz** presented a paper on the poverty status of farm families in a session on family financial problems that was presided over by **Peggy Ross**; and **Nina Glasgow** organized and presided over a session dealing with lifestyles of the rural elderly.

International Economics Division

Edward Overton, **Raymond Nightingale**, and **Margaret Missiaen** went to Abidjan, Ivory Coast, to participate in a U.S. Agency for International Development workshop on assessing food aid needs • **Overton** also traveled to Europe to visit with officials of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, European Economic Community, and Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N. regarding supply response research and to

obtain data on capital investment and resource use in agriculture • **Maurice Landes** traveled to Winnipeg to give a presentation of ERS's food needs assessment methodology as part of a course organized by the Canadian International Development Agency for food administrators from Asia, Africa, and Latin American countries • **Michael Lopez** attended a USDA interagency meeting to discuss the economic implications of the American Rice Millers Association's Section 301 petition for liberalization of the Japanese rice market • **Sophia Huang** spent 6 weeks in Seoul and Taipei collecting information on the agricultural situation in Korea and Taiwan • **Leslie Ross** participated in a conference on Philippine agriculture in transition, in Washington • **Albert Evans** and **Jitendar Mann** discussed with Kiyoshi Kamagal and Hiroshi Tsujii of Kyoto University the plans for ERS's comparative study of rice production, marketing, and credit in the United States, Japan, and Thailand • **Evans** and **Mann** also briefed Sugianto Brotosusento, director of Food Crop Agriculture, Government of Indonesia, on the recent shifts in crop production in Indonesia from rice to corn and soybeans • **Francis Tuan** coordinated the visit of a delegation from China studying economic information systems • **Frederick Crook** visited China to study grain production and obtain data on grain supply and use • **Lawrence Witucki** and **Peter Riley** participated in a conference on the political economy of food in African development • **Brian D'Silva** met with Bashir Omar Fadlalla, Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, Government of Sudan, during the recent annual IMF/World Bank meetings • **Jorge**

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Hazera went to Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay to study the agricultural production and marketing systems of those countries • **Richard Brown** briefed Belize's Minister of Agriculture on the U.S. market for Belize's tropical fruit and vegetable products • **Christine Bolling** briefed a staff member from the U.S. Agricultural Trade Office, Caracas, Venezuela, on an ERS model of the feed grain import demand of Venezuela • **Nicole Ballenger, William Coyle, and Vernon Roningen** briefed White House staff on ERS's trade liberalization project • **Francis Urban** spent one week each in Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Yugoslavia, where he was looking at how economic reforms in those countries are affecting agriculture • and **Kenneth Gray** led a USDA delegation to Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, and Kishinev to study Soviet agrochemical use under the U.S.-U.S.S.R. agricultural exchange program.

National Economics Division

Kathryn Lipton spoke on animal products demand issues at

the Southern Regional Outlook Conference, in Atlanta • **Samuel Evans, Mack Leath, William Lin, Janet Livezy, Thomas Fulton, and Lewrene Glaser** met with Timothy Mackey of the Australian Embassy to discuss U.S. agricultural policies • **Paul Westcott and Richard Stillman** briefed Ir Sugianto, Director of Food Crop Economics, Government of Indonesia, on ERS's *Quarterly Forecasting Model* • **Leath** also discussed the economics of dryland grain production with a Soviet team during its ERS visit • **Lawrence Duewer** served as a "pricing expert" at a meeting of the Montana Beef Industry Solution Session, in Billings • and **Harry Harp and Ralph Parlett** were interviewed by *Wall Street Journal* reporters for articles on the effects of the U.S. drought on U.S. food prices.

Natural Resource Economics Division

Harry Vroomen participated in the Chase Econometrics Annual Agricultural Outlook Conference • **Roger Strohbehn** briefed the Agricultural Counselor of the

Swedish Embassy on ERS's economic evaluation of conservation programs • **John Schaub** met with the Interagency Animal Damage Work Group to agree on roles of contributing USDA agencies • **Peter DeBraal** discussed ERS's data on foreign ownership of U.S. farmland with Hans Windhorst from the Federal Republic of Germany, who is studying that country's investment in U.S. agribusiness • and **Kenneth Krupa** participated in the 1986 Fall Convention of the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing, in Anchorage.

Office of the Administrator

Terry Townsend spoke at a conference of Land O'Lakes Cooperative directors about the future of U.S. agriculture, in Chula Vista, Wisconsin • and **John Lee** participated in a "dialogue" between representatives of commodity groups and providers of foreign development assistance, sponsored by Winrock International and the National Planning Association, on Petit Jean Mountain, Arkansas.